

FROM THE MOON TO THE RACETRACK.



Owner-source photograph · original livery shown unaltered

BUILT TO RACE. BUILT TO ADVANCE.

A black-and-yellow Pro Stock Challenger from the years when Chrysler engineering ambition met the drag strip. This is the story of the car, the people who built it, and the ideas it was built to test.

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[EXPLORE THE ACTUAL CAR →](#)

ONE CAR. ONE MISSION.



Owner-source photograph; photographer unconfirmed

The owner's booklet traces the Motown Missile to a factory 1970 HEMI four-speed Challenger, rebuilt into its late-1971 configuration.

It was built by Ted Spehar and his team working with Chrysler Special Vehicles engineers, as a factory Pro Stock development platform rather than a showroom car.

The body was acid-dipped and lightened. Today it wears the correct 1971 black body and broad yellow billboards, with its period patina deliberately retained.

Source: Owner-supplied Proof 10 booklet, p. 4 (owner account).

SEE THE CAR IN DETAIL →

WHAT DOES THE MOON HAVE TO DO WITH PRO STOCK?



Period photograph; photographer unconfirmed

In the 1960s, Chrysler's Space Division developed and built the first stage of the Saturn IB rocket used on early Apollo missions.

That expertise travelled. Ron Killen, an aerospace electronics engineer from Huntsville, moved into Chrysler's Race Division to work on data analysis for NASCAR and Pro Stock.

Period reporting in January 1972 described this Challenger as an engineering test bed, with its findings fed to other Chrysler team cars. The link is people and know-how — not rocket hardware in a race car.

Source: Stellantis corporate history (2019); Second Pro Stock Missile Seminar transcript; HOT ROD, January 1972.

READ THE CONNECTION →

THE TEAM BEHIND THE MISSILE.



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Tom Hoover conceived and championed the program. Ted Spehar and his team built the car. Dick Oldfield and Don Carlton drove it.

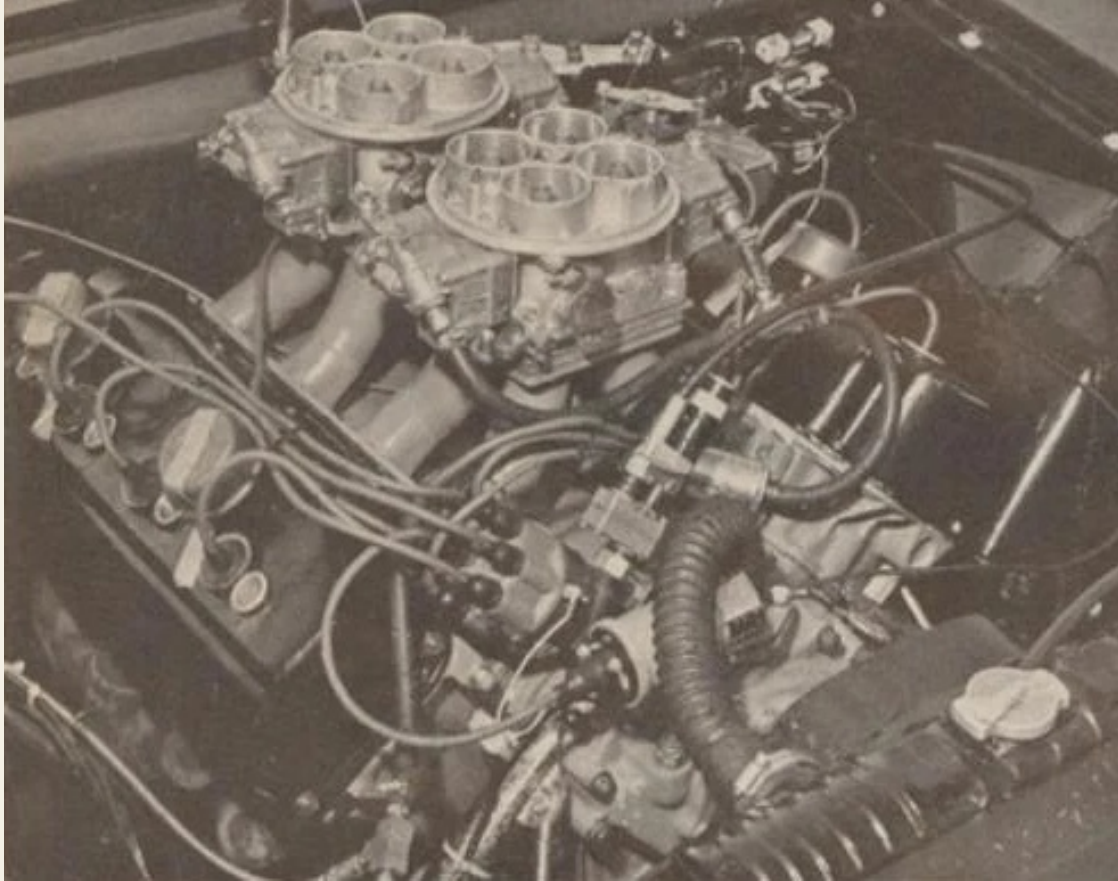
Around them, Chrysler engineers brought advanced chassis work, engine development and space-age materials to a single question: how do you make a car launch harder and run cleaner?

Ron Killen's ignition work and the team's data-led approach turned every pass into information.

Source: Owner-supplied Proof 10 booklet, p. 6 (booklet photo credit: Cliff Gromer).

MEET THE PEOPLE AND SOURCES →

426 HEMI. DUAL-PLUG.



Period publication image · owner-linked Mopar Action article (2010)

At the heart is a 426 dual-plug HEMI, block 30. Mullens-ported heads feed from a tunnel ram, with modified Holley 1050 CFM carburetors prepared by John Bauman.

A Ramcharger oil system with a custom swing pickup kept oil where the engine needed it under hard launch. Internal parts were machine-lightened and chemically milled.

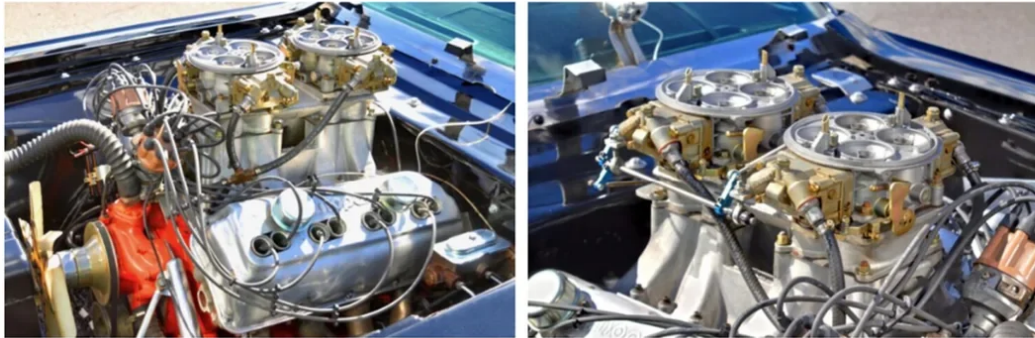
Power goes through an aluminum A-833 four-speed with a Hurst inline shifter to a Dana 60 rear axle with 5.38 gearing.

Source: Owner-supplied Proof 10 booklet, pp. 7-8 (described historical configuration).

EXPLORE THE ENGINEERING →

THE SCIENCE OF THE LAUNCH.

HEMI MOPAR® ENGINES



Period publication section · HEMI MOPAR® ENGINES

Ron Killen's capacitive-discharge ignition used magnetic crank triggers with split timing across dual distributors, driven by a Hilborn dual-drive unit.

Engine research aimed at measurable gains: intake resonator tuning, lower rotating inertia and friction, better compression and efficiency, less weight, and carburetion matched to air density and mass flow.

Each idea could be tried on this car before it reached others.

Source: Owner-supplied Proof 10 booklet, pp. 7-8 and 14 (engine R&D; photo Motown Missile Racing).

EVERY RUN, RECORDED.



ABOVE LEFT—The Motown Missile is the ultimate in scienced-out race cars, and has set a pattern that all the other MoPars are following. It has run 9.59 at 143 mph seemingly with ease. ABOVE RIGHT—The team selected 68 Dart spindles to lower the car, and a set of Airheart discs and Exhibition Engineering brake hats. Suspension was designed with the aid of a computer. LEFT—The heart of any race car is the engine, and this hemi is something else. It uses TRW pistons, 13.2:1 compression, twin spark plug heads, homemade manifold with twin Holley 4500's worked by John Baumann, Chrysler Grand National cranks and rods, milled and lightened block, aluminum water pump setup, and a host of other trick items for longevity and power. RIGHT—Even the cooling system has some tricks. Builder Ted Spehar uses a stock slip fan mechanism, but it mounts on the crank instead of the fan to eliminate both fan and water pump drag at high rpm. BELOW LEFT—Rear suspension uses wheelie bars to launch the car, with superstiff '65 springs, Chrysler shocks. Power comes back from the trickiest B&M Clutchflite in existence. BELOW RIGHT—Spehar and Oldfield actually mill-machined the interior and exterior surfaces to get rid of all that troublesome cast iron!

Period publication page · source as recorded in owner booklet

According to the owner's account, the team adapted recording technology developed by Chrysler's Space Division for NASA programs.

Multi-channel strip-chart recorders and a Data Van with its own weather station logged each pass, so the team could compare a launch against the conditions it ran in.

The result was a car that produced answers as well as times.

Source: Owner-supplied Proof 10 booklet, p. 9 (owner account).

SEE THE DATA VAN STORY →

WEIGHT TRANSFER, ENGINEERED.



Period photograph; photographer unconfirmed

The chassis was tuned to move weight to the rear tires at the right moment: adjustable wheelie bars, carefully set shocks, and titanium strut rods and hardware.

Up front, fascia, splitter and hood-scoop development explored how air moved over and through the car.

Historically the team also tested a clutch-launched, manually shifted B&M six-speed — an experiment distinct from the four-speed described in the car today.

Source: Owner-supplied Proof 10 booklet, pp. 10–11 (six-speed photo: Tom Hoover family).

WHERE THE DRIVER WORKED.



Period publication image · owner-linked Mopar Action article (2010)

The cockpit is a working space: shifter, gauges and controls arranged for a driver with seconds to get everything right.

The owner's booklet presents cockpit photography by Cliff Gromer and records a signed front valance, photographed by Motown Missile Racing.

Signatures and display history are presented as the owner's account and remain open to specialist review.

Source: Owner-supplied Proof 10 booklet, pp. 17-18 and 20.

OPEN THE GALLERY →

THE ADVANTAGE DID NOT STOP AT ONE CAR.

The stopwatch measured a run. The engineering effort reached further.

Period reporting describes findings from this test bed being passed to other Chrysler team cars, and Ron Killen's firsthand account describes test reports shared among racers once ideas proved useful.

That is the car's real significance: a place to test what came next, for more than one team.

BUILT TO RACE. BUILT TO ADVANCE.

Source: HOT ROD, January 1972; Second Pro Stock Missile Seminar transcript (Eugene Yetter).

READ THE INFLUENCE STORY →

HEY STARMAN — WANNA RACE?



Trunk artwork by Greg of Akron · owner-supplied photograph

The car carries its own space story. Greg of Akron's trunk artwork shows the Motown Missile as a rocket-bodied craft streaking past a rainbow and a bright star.

That painting inspired the Vision Film's finale, where the car becomes a craft and climbs into orbit with one line on screen: "Hey Starman—wanna race?"

Source: Owner-supplied Proof 10 booklet, p. 21. Film scenes are a cinematic interpretation, not historical footage.

WATCH THE FINALE →

LAUNCH CONTROL.

MOTOWN MISSILE FROM THE MOON TO THE RACETRACK.



BUILT TO RACE. BUILT TO ADVANCE.
THE NEXT CUSTODIAN AWAITS.

MOTOWNMISSILE.COM

VISION FILM v1.20.1 · 105s · CINEMATIC INTERPRETATION

Vision Film v1.20.1 poster · Cinematic interpretation

A 105-second narrated film follows the story from the Moon to the racetrack and back to the actual car. Best watched with sound on.

The astronaut, craft and space scenes are fictional brand storytelling. The car, its lettering and its livery come from real photographs.

Source: Vision Film · Cinematic interpretation.

WATCH THE VISION FILM →

RACING HISTORY. YOUR NEXT CHAPTER.



Owner-source photograph; photographer unconfirmed

THE NEXT CUSTODIAN AWAITS.

The current custodian, Arnie Klann, presents the car with its owner booklet, photographs and source records. These are available for review; final inclusions and transfer rights are documented in the sale agreement.

Private auction targeted for Q1 2027 — tentative. Auction partner, date and terms are awaiting confirmation.

Start with the collector briefing, then request collector access.

Source: Current-condition inspection and independent review remain essential before any purchase.

BEGIN THE COLLECTOR PATH →

READ THE RECORD.

Historical details in this edition come from the owner-supplied Proof 10 booklet and the period sources below. They describe the car's development history; they are not an independent authentication or a current inspection. Chrysler's aerospace work is cited for context and implies no NASA endorsement, no Saturn V hardware and no Apollo-flown parts.

SOURCES

Stellantis — Chrysler helped power NASA to the Moon (2019) →

<https://blog.stellantisnorthamerica.com/2019/07/22/chrysler-helped-power-nasa-to-the-moon/>

Second Pro Stock Missile Seminar — Ron Killen account (East13) →

<https://www.east13.org/hx/14/p6.htm>

HOT ROD — The New Motown Missile, January 1972 →

<https://www.hotrod.com/features/the-new-motown-missile-january-1972-982-718-66-1>

NASA — Apollo 7 mission →

<https://www.nasa.gov/mission/apollo-7/>

Owner-supplied Proof 10 booklet, pp. 4-25 — provenance record →

<https://motownmissile.com/provenance>

Photo credits and reproduction rights →

<https://motownmissile.com/photo-rights>

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MOTOWNMISSILE.COM

Vision Film

Collector briefing

Auction details

Credits: Cliff Gromer, Dick Oldfield Collection, Motown Missile Racing, Tom Hoover family, Joe Pappas, James Maxwell; artwork Greg of Akron. Each credit stays with its image.

FULL PROVENANCE RECORD →